

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows.

Claims 1-7 (canceled).

8. (original) A method for screening for a neoplastic disease characterized by an increase in expression of VEGF-D, comprising:

obtaining a sample from an organism suspected of being in a neoplastic disease state characterized by an increase in expression of VEGF-D;

exposing said sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

washing said sample; and

screening for said disease by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said tissue sample, where detection of VEGF-D in cells in or around a potential neoplastic growth is indicative of a neoplastic disease.

9. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

10. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

11. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.

12. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein said neoplastic disease is selected from the group consisting of malignant melanoma, breast ductal carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, prostate cancer and endometrial cancer.

13. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein said sample is a human tissue sample.

14. (original) A method for screening for a neoplastic disease characterized by an increase in expression of VEGF-D, comprising:

obtaining a sample from an organism suspected of being in a neoplastic disease state characterized by an increase in expression of VEGF-D;

exposing said sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

washing said sample; and

screening for said disease by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said sample, where detection of VEGF-D in or on blood vessel endothelial cells in or around a potential neoplastic growth is indicative of a neoplastic disease.

15. (original) A method according to claim 14, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

16. (original) A method according to claim 15, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

17. (original) A method according to claim 14, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.

18. (original) A method for screening for a neoplastic disease characterized by an increase in blood vessel vascular endothelial cells, comprising:

obtaining a sample from an organism suspected of being in a neoplastic disease state characterized by an increase in blood vessel vascular endothelial cells;

exposing said sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

washing said sample; and

screening for disease by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said sample, where detection of VEGF-D in or on blood vessel endothelial cells in or around a potential neoplastic growth is indicative of a neoplastic disease.

19. (original) A method according to claim 18, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

20. (original) A method according to claim 19, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

21. (original) A method according to claim 18, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.

22. (original) A method according to claim 18, further comprising exposing the sample to a second compound that specifically binds to at least one of VEGFR-2 and VEGFR-3, and wherein the screening step comprises detection of the compound that binds VEGF-D and the second compound bound to blood vessel vascular endothelial cells, to determine the presence, quantity or distribution of blood vessel endothelial cells having both VEGF-D and at least one of VEGFR-2 and VEGFR-3 in or around a potential neoplastic growth.

23. (original) A method for screening for a neoplastic disease characterized by an increase in lymph vessel endothelial cells, comprising:

obtaining a sample from an organism suspected of being in a neoplastic disease state characterized by an increase in lymph vessel endothelial cells;

exposing said sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

washing said sample; and

screening for said disease by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said sample, where detection of VEGF-D in or on lymph vessel endothelial cells in or around a potential neoplastic growth is indicative of a neoplastic disease.

24. (original) A method according to claim 23, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

25. (original) A method according to claim 24, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

26. (original) A method according to claim 23, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.

27. (original) A method according to claim 23, further comprising exposing the sample to a second compound that specifically binds to VEGFR-3, and wherein the screening step comprises detection of the compound that binds VEGF-D and the second compound bound to lymph vessel endothelial cells, to determine the presence, quantity or distribution of lymph vessel endothelial cells having both VEGF-D and VEGFR-3 in or around a potential neoplastic growth.

Claims 28-35 (canceled).

36. (original) A method of screening a tumor for metastatic risk, said method comprising:

    exposing a tumor sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

    washing said sample; and

    screening for metastatic risk by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said sample, where expression of VEGF-D by said tumor is indicative of metastatic risk.

37. (original) A method according to claim 36, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

38. (original) A method according to claim 37, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

39. (original) A method according to claim 36, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.

40. (original) A method of detecting micro-metastasis of a neoplastic disease state characterized by an increase in expression of VEGF-D comprising:

    obtaining a tissue sample from a site spaced from a neoplastic growth in an organism in said neoplastic disease state;

    exposing said sample to a composition comprising a compound that specifically binds VEGF-D;

washing said sample; and

screening for said metastasis of said neoplastic disease by detecting the presence, quantity or distribution of said compound in said tissue sample, where detection of VEGF-D in said tissue sample is indicative of metastasis of said neoplastic disease.

41. (original) A method according to claim 40, wherein said tissue sample is a lymph node from tissue surrounding said neoplastic growth.

42. (original) A method according to claim 40, wherein said compound is a monoclonal antibody which specifically binds VEGF-D.

43. (original) A method according to claim 42, wherein said antibody binds to the VEGF homology domain of VEGF-D.

44. (original) A method according to claim 40, wherein a said compound includes a detectable label.